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COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
First session
29 March-8 April 1993
Agenda item 16

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS FIRST SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Denis A. Davis

Action taken by the Committee

Cross-sectoral programmes for coordinated action by the United Nations system in the area of water resources: information management

(Agenda item 9 (a))

1. At the _____ meeting, on _____ April 1993, the Chairman of the Committee made the following statement on behalf of the Committee:

The Committee wishes to stress the importance of integrated information as an indispensable basis for the sustainable development and management of land and water resources.

The Committee:

(a) Recommends that the organizations of the United Nations system provide assistance to Governments, as appropriate, towards the establishment or strengthening of their databases as tools for integrated action in the development and management of water resources, at the national and regional levels. Such databases should incorporate socio-economic, biological, physical and chemical parameters into integrated systems, notably geographical information systems (GIS), to be shared by sectoral authorities, decision makers, non-governmental

organizations, research institutions and the private sector. Priority attention needs to be given to drought-prone countries, where the lack of information has resulted in a haphazard development of water resources, and in particular of groundwater;

(b) Takes note with appreciation of the coordinated efforts of the organizations of the United Nations system in the establishment of a system-wide integrated monitoring and assessment network, with a view to evaluating periodically the state of the freshwater resources on a global basis, and recommends that they give urgent consideration to this task, in full cooperation with the regional commissions.

Action taken by the Committee

Cross-sectoral programmes for coordinated action by the United Nations system in the area of water resources: capacity-building for water resources management

(Agenda item 9 (b))

2. At the _____ meeting, on _____ April 1993, the Chairman of the Committee made the following statement on behalf of the Committee:

While recognizing that capacity-building is one of the essential preconditions for the implementation of Agenda 21 and the achievement of sustainable development, the Committee wishes to emphasize that human resources development should be primarily considered as a tool for the institutional strengthening of governmental, private and non-governmental organizations.

National capacity-building in the area of water resources management must include the capacity to undertake regional assessments of the relationship between water and soils as a resource, based on strategic scientific surveys involving geological and hydrological approaches, together with relevant socio-economic and ecological studies, as well as the capacity to integrate this information with other information sets in a holistic management strategy. In this regard, airborne radiometric data sets can be particularly valuable in providing the basis for a strategic understanding and management of soils.

In dealing with issues of capacity-building, the Committee wishes to stress the need to develop policies aimed at the retention of trained personnel needed to implement water resources development and management programmes continuously and successfully.

The Committee takes into account that the great diversity of conditions faced by water-short regions of the world calls for the execution of selected case-studies to identify their main underlying causes and characteristics.

The Committee stresses the importance of strengthening South-South cooperation and coordination in capacity-building, together with increasing North-South cooperation, especially in the areas of financial support and technology transfer, as the achievement of sustainable development in the field of water resources will require a fair and equitable sharing of knowledge between developed and developing countries.

In view of the above and other considerations, the Committee:

(a) Recommends that organizations of the United Nations system promote capacity-building as a component of all technical cooperation programmes, unless a specific need for a separate programme is identified;

(b) Welcomes the ongoing assistance of various United Nations organizations with regard to capacity-building for water resources development and management;

(c) Recommends that such assistance be increased in the future, taking into account local conditions, specific needs and constraints faced by individual countries. Besides training and the transfer of technology, this assistance should also include the adequate provision of equipment and machinery;

(d) Recommends that on-the-job training programmes take into consideration the wider requirements of capacity-building for water resources planning and management;

(e) Recommends that the above-mentioned case-studies be based on a holistic approach and thus consider both bio-geo-chemical and socio-technological cycles of water, with a view to supporting human resources development in developing countries, and that priority be assigned to drought-stricken regions of developing countries.

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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS FIRST SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Denis A. Davis

Action taken by the Committee

Activities of the United Nations system in the field of mineral resources

(Agenda item 10)

1. The Committee reaffirmed the importance of mineral resources for sustainable development, particularly of developing countries and economies in transition.

2. Having reviewed the activities of the United Nations in the development and management of mineral resources, the Committee expressed its support for the technical cooperation activities carried out by the Department of Economic and Social Development in that field, including their economic and scientific aspects.

3. The Committee stressed that providing assistance and support to the developing countries and economies in transition to attract foreign investments and negotiate complex foreign investment agreements was among the important areas of such technical cooperation.

4. The Committee noted, in particular, the important social role of mineral resources development and its potential contribution in the fight against poverty. It stressed that the social implications of the ongoing trend towards privatization of mining activities should receive adequate attention.

5. With regard to its own role in relation to non-renewable energy sources, the Committee wishes to underscore the following:

(a) The role of the new Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and Energy for Development is fully acknowledged;

(b) Note is taken of the fact that the mandate of the above new Committee is focused on energy development, efficiency and consumption;

(c) The exploration and extraction of coal and uranium resources have much in common with those activities as related to other mineral resources;

(d) Likewise, environmental impacts of the exploration and extraction of coal and uranium have close affinities with those related to other mineral resources;

(e) Furthermore, non-renewable energy minerals are also used for the production of other products and as a substitute for other commodities.

6. In view of the above, when the Committee is considering issues that are common to exploration, extracting, processing and the environmental impact of mineral resources in general, it would not necessarily wish to exclude energy resources.

7. The Committee noted with regret the absence of a report by the United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration at the first session of the Committee.

8. The Committee recommends:

(a) That the Secretary-General be requested by the Economic and Social Council to prepare for the second session of the Committee a report on technical cooperation activities of the United Nations system in the mining sector, and in doing so, to attribute special attention to projects aimed at enhancing the capacity of the developing countries and economies in transition (i) to develop effective foreign investment policies and negotiate mining investment agreements, and (ii) to develop and implement adequate social policies to respond to the ongoing trends towards privatization of the mining sector;

(b) That the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme be invited by the Economic and Social Council to submit, at the second session of the Committee, a report on the activities of the United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration. Such a report should include current administrative mechanisms and financing arrangements, as well as an extensive assessment of achievements and future programmes of activities of the Fund, taking into consideration the increased involvement of private foreign mining companies into the mining sector of developing countries and economies in transition.

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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS FIRST SESSION

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Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Denis A. Davis

Action taken by the Committee

Flow of financial resources and transfer of technology to develop the mineral resources of developing countries

(Agenda item 11 (a))

At the _____ meeting on _____ April 1993, the Chairman of the Committee made the following statement on behalf of the Committee:

The Committee welcomes the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on ways and means of facilitating the flow of financial resources and transfer of technology to develop the mineral resources of developing countries (E/C.7/1993/9) and underlines the importance of multilateral and bilateral aid programmes for developing the mineral resources of developing countries, as well as the growing importance of private foreign investment. Special reference is made to chapter II, sections A, B and C, of the report.

The Committee recommends:

That the Secretary-General be requested by the Economic and Social Council to update his report (E/C.7/1993/9) for the second session of the Committee, taking into account the special needs of the economies in transition as well as requirements for environmental protection. The

report should also take into account comments made by the members of the Committee on this issue, devote special attention to the collection and adequate presentation of geological and mining information and to conditions of mineral rights and country profile (including political and commercial risks); and take into account these items in existing and future projects of the mineral programmes of the United Nations, and also collect and include relevant information available from non-governmental organizations.

Action taken by the Committee

Issues concerning the more efficient use of materials, their recycling, their replacement by high-technology substitutes, and the transfer of such technologies

(Agenda item 11 (b))

At the _____ meeting, on _____ April 1993, the Chairman of the Committee made the following statement on behalf of the Committee:

Mineral-producing developing countries and the economies in transition cannot afford to be oblivious to the substitution that is taking place and also the trend in increased use of recycled mineral products in the major markets which they serve. The demand for mineral products in the industrialized countries continues on a declining trend as a result of a process of "dematerialization", i.e., replacement of traditional materials with new ones and with technologies less intensive in mineral products.

In view of this development, the Committee recommends that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development continue to produce "forecast analyses" of the demand of major mineral products, taking into account as much as possible the trends and technologies mentioned above. The forecast scenarios, prepared with the cooperation of developing countries, can be useful instruments for policy makers of developing countries. As a complementary activity, the United Nations system could also promote international cooperation in research and development of new materials and the effective transfer of such technologies to the developing countries.

In view of the important and potentially negative effects that the reduction of demand from industrialized countries may have on developing countries and economies in transition, the Committee recommends that a study be conducted on the long-term effects of the more efficient use of mineral products, their recycling and their replacement by high-technology substitutes and on measures to be taken to improve the situation of developing countries, including capacity-building, transfer and adaptation of technologies relative to new materials production and processing.

The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested by the Economic and Social Council to prepare, in cooperation with relevant United Nations organizations and agencies, the study mentioned above.

The Committee hopes that assistance would be provided by donor countries or organizations in the preparation of the study. In this connection, the Committee requests the Secretary-General to pursue, through the Economic and Social Council, with the Governments of Italy and other industrialized countries, ways to provide assistance in carrying out the study.